

Message Text

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FAS FOR GRAIN AND FEEDS/NOVOTNY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, CZ
SUBJ: CZECHOSLOVAK HARVEST SITUATION

REF: VIENNA 06602

1. AG ATTACHE AND ECON/COM OFFICER MET ON AUGUST 2 TOMAN AND ROSA OF FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE FOR BRIEFING ON LATEST HARVEST SITUATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. FOLLOWING ARE MAJOR POINTS LEARNED DURING DISCUSSION.
2. MINAG OFFICIALS HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE PRODUCTION TARGETS SHOULD BE MET IN 1978 OR COME CLOSE TO DESPITE COLD AND RELATIVELY WET GROWING SEASON WHICH DELAYED RIPENING OF CROP. THEY DO NOT NECESSARILY EXPECT RECORD YIELDS HOWEVER, EXCEPT PERHAPS IN THE CASE OF WHEAT.
3. HARVEST IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY WELL UNDERWAY AND IS ABOUT 70 PERCENT COMPLETED. EARLY RESULTS ARE ENCOURAGING. MAJOR PART OF HARVEST IN WEST HOWEVER STILL THREE WEEKS AWAY AND WEATHER DURING THESE

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THREE WEEKS SHOULD HAVE A DECISIVE INFLUENCE ON OVERALL SUCCESS OF HARVEST.

4. ALTHOUGH LODGING IN MANY AREAS WIDESPREAD, MINAG OFFICIALS DISCOUNT ITS ADVERSE EFFECT ON HARVEST RESULTS. ADEQUATE MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT SHOULD HOLD HARVEST LOSSES TO MINIMUM.

5. CZECHOSLOVAKIA HOPES TO HARVEST RECORD YIELDS IN WHEAT, ABOUT .2 TONS PER HECTARE MORE THAN IN 1977. THUS DESPITE LOWER WHEAT ACREAGE IN 1978, PRODUCTION SHOULD MATCH 1977 RESULTS.

6. ABOUT 1 MIL TONS OF CORN IS EXPECTED FROM THE 200,000 HECTARES SOWN FOR SEED. ALTHOUGH PRESENT CONDITION OF THE CORN CROP NOT THE BEST (DEVELOPMENT OF PLANT DELAYED DUE TO LATE SOWING AND COOL WEATHER), GOOD WEATHER DURING AUGUST COULD IMPROVE PROSPECTS FOR A GOOD CORN CROP.

7. COMMENTS. MINAG OFFICIALS APPEAR SOMEWHAT MORE OPTIMISTIC OVER HARVEST PROSPECTS THAN CROP CONDITIONS AT THIS STAGE WOULD WARRANT. MOREOVER, BRIEFING SEEMED TO BE SOMEWHAT CONTRADICTORY. THEY ADMIT RECORD CROP MAY NOT BE FORTHCOMING (PRESUMABLY YIELD PER HECTARE) DUE TO COOL AND WET GROWING SEASON, BUT AT THE SAME TIME THEY EXPECT PRODUCTION TARGET TO BE MET. THE RANGE OF DISCREPANCY AMOUNTS TO .5 MIL TONS, WHICH IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RECORD CROP OF 10.3 MIL TONS HARVESTED IN 1977 AND THE 1978 PRODUCTION TARGET OF 10.8 MIL TONS.

8. AG ATTACHE OBSERVED FIELD CONDITIONS EXTENSIVELY BOTH IN EAST (SLOVAKIA) AND WEST (CZECH LANDS) AND FOUND LARGE UNCLASSIFIED

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EXTENT OF LODGING IN SEVERAL AREAS. FLAT FIELDS WERE PARTICULARLY EXTENSIVE IN THE EAST, COVERING ROUGHLY 30 PERCENT--MAINLY WHEAT. FURTHERMORE, IN SEVERAL FIELDS GRAIN WAS NOT RIPENING AT THE SAME TIME. CONDITIONS IN THE WEST, WHICH CONTRIBUTES ABOUT TWO THIRDS TO THE NATION'S GRAIN CROP, WERE SOMEWHAT BETTER. THE CORN CROP LOOKED RATHER WEAK, UNEQUAL GROWTH, AND SHORT STANDING. CORN CROP WILL BE LATE MATURING, WHICH CARRIES DANGER OF DAMAGE FROM EARLY FALL FREEZES.

9. BASED ON BRIEFING RECEIVED AND FIELD OBSERVATIONS, FOLLOWING ARE TENTATIVE ESTIMATES FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S GRAIN CROP IN 1978. ACCORDING TO LATEST OFFICIAL FIGURES 2,734,000 HECTARES WERE SOWN TO 1978 GRAIN CROP WHICH INCLUDE 203,000 HECTARES FOR CORN (GRAIN). ASSUMING PER HECTARE YIELD REMAINS ABOUT SAME AS IN 1977 AT 3.85 TONS, THEORETICALLY THIS SHOULD BRING 10.5 MIL TONS OF GRAIN IF ALL ACREAGE SOWN TO CORN REMAINS HARVESTED. HOWEVER, PAST EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THAT PART OF CORN ACREAGE WILL BE CUT AGAIN FOR SILEAGE, WHICH MAY LEAVE ONLY ABOUT 180,000 HECTARES CORN FOR GRAIN. FURTHERMORE, GIVEN THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CORN CROP,

IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT CZECHOSLOVAKIA CN HARVEST THE
HOPED FOR 5.0 TONS PER HECTARE. ASSUMING A 4.5 TONS PER
HECTARE YIELD CORN PRODUCTION MAY COME CLOSER TO .8 MIL
TONS OR FALL EVEN BELOW THIS TONNAGE. THIS SHOULD BRING
A TOTAL OF ABOUT 10.3 MIL TONS OF GRAIN. THIS TONNAGE,
WHILE BELOW THE TARGETED 10.8 MIL TONS, IS NEVERTHELESS
STILL A RESPECTABLE VOLUME. ONLY EXCEPTIONALLY AND
PROLONGED GOOD WEATHER DURING THE NEXT THREE WEEKS COULD
IMPROVE PROSPECTS FOR A LARGER GRAIN CROP.
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